

Relative Clauses and Nominalized Sentences in Yoruba

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One characteristic feature of a relative clause in Yoruba is that it is introduced by the relative particle *tí* 'that'. The occurrence of this particle is, therefore, sometimes believed to be a sufficient indication that a noun phrase contains a relative clause. Thus in sentences (1) to (3), the subject of each sentence is considered to be a noun phrase containing a relative clause.

- (1) *ìwé tí mo rà dára*
book that I buy good
'The book that I bought is good'
- (2) *rírà tí mo ra ìwé dára*
buying that I buy book good
'The buying that I bought a book is good'
i.e. 'The fact that I bought a book is good'
- (3) *kíákíá tí mo ra ìwé dára*
quickly that I buy book good
'Quickly that I bought a book is good'
i.e. 'The fact that I bought a book quickly is good'

Since the relative clause must have a noun antecedent or 'head' to which it is a 'qualifier', the initial word in each of the above sentences is therefore automatically regarded as the noun head.¹

A close scrutiny of the above sentences, however, reveals important differences between (1) on the one hand, and (2)-(3) on the other. Semantically, a restrictive relative clause provides additional information about the noun it qualifies.² Thus in (1) we are told that there is a book, and that the book is the particular one bought by the speaker. In contrast to this, (2) does not refer to a particular type of 'buying' nor does (3) to a particular kind of 'quickly'. Rather the reference is respectively to the fact of buying a book, and of buying it quickly.

The semantic difference noted above is paralleled by a number of syntactic differences. Firstly, it is possible to delete the relative clause in (1) and yet have a grammatical sentence that retains the essential meaning of the original sentence. Thus, although (1) can pass as an expansion of (4), neither (5) nor (6) appears to be grammatical, and they are far removed from the meanings of (2) and (3) respectively.

- (4) ìwé dára
book good
'The book is good'
- (5) *rírà dára
buying good
'The buying is good'
- (6) *kíákíá dára
quickly good
'Quickly is good'

Secondly, the meaning expressed in (1) can be captured by the sentences in (7) but no such sentences are available for (2) and (3).

- (7) ìwé .kan wà; mo ra ìwé náà; ìwé náà dára
book one is; I buy book the; book the good
'There is a certain book; I bought the book;
the book is good'.
- (8) *rírà .kan wà; mo ra rírà ìwé náà; rírà náà
buying one is; I buy buying book the; buying the
dára
good
'There is a certain buying; I bought the buying of
the book; the buying is good'
- (9) *kíákíá .kan wà; mo ra kíákíá ìwé náà; kíákíá
quickly one is; I buy quickly book the; quickly
náà dára
the good
'There is a certain quickly; I bought the quickly
of the book; the quickly is good'

Quite apart from the ungrammaticality of (8) and (9), the meanings conveyed by these sentences, to the extent that such meanings can be grasped, are very different from the meanings of (2) and (3) respectively.³

Thirdly, the relative clause in (1) can be questioned by .wo 'which', but neither of the two analogous clauses in (2) and (3) can be so questioned. The following sentences illustrate this point:

- (10) ìwé .wo ni ó dára?
'Which book is good?'
- (11) *rírà .wo ni ó dára?
'Which buying is good?'
- (12) *kíákíá .wo ni ó dára?
'Which quickly is good?'

Although (10) is a possible questioning of the relative clause in (1), the analogous questions for (2) and (3) appear to be not only ungrammatical but inappropriate to the sentences concerned.

Considering the semantic and syntactic differences outlined above, it is clear that sentence (1) on the one hand, and sentences (2) and (3) on the other do not belong together. Whereas it makes sense to talk of a head and a qualifier in respect of the noun phrase in (1), the same division is inappropriate and meaningless for (2) and (3). In fact, these two sentences contain instances of a factive nominalization which presupposes the truth of the action or state asserted in the sentence that is nominalized. Thus in (2) there is a presupposition that a book is bought and in (3) that this book is bought quickly. An alternative way of forming a factive nominalization is by adding pé 'that' to the sentence. Thus (2) and (3) could as well be expressed by (13a) and (13b) respectively where the pé form of the nominalization substitutes for the pseudo relative construction:

- (13) a. pé mo ra ìwé dára
that I buy book good
'The fact that I bought a book is good'
- b. pé mo ra ìwé kíákíá dára
that I buy book quickly good
'The fact that I bought a book quickly is good'

Sentences such as (13) result from a movement transformation in which the factive nominalization originally occurring after a verb is moved to become the superficial subject thus replacing the impersonal subject ó 'it'. Thus (13a) is derived from (14a). The factive nominalization also has two other variants introduced by bí and tí as shown in (14b) and (14c) respectively.

- (14) a. ó dára pé mo ra ìwé
it good that I buy book
- b. ó dára bí mo se ra ìwé
it good as I buy book
- c. ó dára tí mo ra ìwé
it good that I buy book
'It is good that I bought a book'
i.e. 'The fact that I bought a book is good'

A factive nominalization typically occurs as subject with verbs that can take the impersonal subject ó 'it'. Examples of such verbs are dára 'be good', dùn 'pain', wù 'please', sú 'tire', bí nínú 'make angry', dùn mó 'be pleasing to', yà lènu 'surprise'. Whereas a nonimpersonal verb can occur with a true relative clause, such occurrence is not possible with a factive nominalization. Thus, the noun phrase in (1) which contains a relative clause can occur with the verb tóbi 'be big' as in (15a), but the noun phrase in (2) cannot so occur, as the impossibility of (15b) illustrates.

- (15) a. ìwé tí mo rà tóbi
 'The book that I bought is big'
 b. *rírà tí mo ra ìwé tóbi
 'The fact that I bought a book is big'
 c. *ó tóbi pé mo ra ìwé
 'It is big that I bought a book'

The impossibility of (15b) is not just a factor of the incompatibility of subject and verb in terms of selectional restrictions. It derives directly from the fact that the verb in question cannot occur with an impersonal subject as the non-occurrence of (15c) shows.

The claim has been made earlier that the noun phrase in

- (1) ìwé tí mo rà dára
 book that I buy good
 'The book that I bought is good'

is a case of the occurrence of a true relative clause. But there is, in fact, another reading of (1) which makes it a factive nominalization as well, i.e.

- (16) ìwé tí mo rà dára
 book that I buy good
 'The fact that I bought a book is good'

which is identical in meaning with (13a) and (14a). This fact is interesting in that it shows that the pseudo relative clause is a uniform way of expressing a factive nominalization. Thus (1) is both a noun phrase containing a head noun plus a relative clause qualifier, and a factive nominalization. This ambiguity is clearly borne out by the two different meanings and the fact that (16) can be substituted by one of the variants of a factive nominalization.

That noun phrases analogous to the one in (16) can be interpreted as a factive nominalization is something which can be easily demonstrated. In the first place, there are such phrases which admit only of this interpretation. For example,

- (17) ọrẹ mi tó kú ni kò jẹ kí n wá
 friend my that he died is not let that I come
 'It was the fact that my friend died that
 prevented me from coming'

can only be interpreted as a factive nominalization. Any attempt to interpret it as a relative clause will give the nonsensical meaning that my friend who was already dead was able to prevent me from coming. Secondly, there is a difference in the questioning of the two types of noun phrases. This difference is best illustrated in the case of an ambiguous sentence such as

- (18) ọrẹ mi tó dé ni kò jẹ kí n wá
 friend my that he arrived is not let that I come

- (18) a. 'It was my friend that arrived that prevented me from coming'
 b. 'It was the fact that my friend arrived that prevented me from coming'

The (a) meaning corresponds to the interpretation as a relative clause, while the (b) meaning corresponds to the interpretation as a factive nominalization. The appropriate questioning of the noun phrases is as follows:

- (19) a. ta ni kò jẹ kí n wá
 who is not let that I come
 'Who prevented me from coming?'
 b. kí ni kò jẹ kí n wá
 what is not let that I come
 'What prevented me from coming?'

(19a) is the appropriate question for the noun phrase with a relative clause which is a human NP and the Causer in the sentence. On the other hand, (19b) is the appropriate question for the factive nominalization which is a non-human NP having the role of Instrument in the sentence.

Just as there is ambiguity in the interpretation of (1) as a relative clause and as a factive nominalization as in (13), a similar kind of ambiguity may be observed in (2) and (3). A careful reading of the two sentences will show that in addition to the meaning already given showing them to be a factive nominalization, there is another possible meaning as may be illustrated in the sentences:

- (20) rírá tí mo ra ìwé dára
 'The manner in which I bought a book is good'
 (21) kíákíá tí mo ra ìwé dára
 'The way in which I bought a book quickly is good'

This second meaning suggests that there is another type of nominalization, a manner nominalization, which is attested in (20) and (21).⁴ Proof that this is the case is that the two sentences have variants which are manner nominalizations. Thus (20) has the variant (22), and (21) has the variant (23).

- (22) bí mo ẹ se ra ìwé dára
 'The manner in which I bought a book is good'
 (23) bí mo ẹ se ra ìwé kíákíá dára
 'The way in which I bought a book quickly is good'

It can be seen, therefore, that any sentence of the type (2) and (3) or (20) and (21) containing a reduplicated "verbal noun" or an adverb followed by a sentence introduced by tí is ambiguous as between a factive and a manner nominalization.⁵ Thus, any

sentence of the form (2) or (20) can be interpreted either as (13a) or (22).

The conclusion from the foregoing is that not all clauses introduced by tí in Yoruba are to be regarded as relative clauses. As we have seen, the clauses in (1), (2) and (3) are so introduced, but they are all one variant of a factive nominalization, while (2) and (3) can also be interpreted as a manner nominalization. Only the clause in (1) can be interpreted as a relative clause qualifying a noun head.

One important implication of this finding is that it will no longer be sufficient to use the mere presence of tí as evidence of nominal status. In a factive or manner nominalization in which tí occurs, it is the whole phrase, and not just the word preceding tí, that is a nominal. Where a word preceding tí can be interpreted as a noun, this is simply because such a word can be identified independently as a noun in another context. For example, ìwé 'book' is a noun in (1) simply because it can be identified as such in (24).

- (1) ìwé tí mo rà dára
book that I buy good
'The book that I bought is good'
- (24) mo ra ìwé
I buy book
'I bought a book'

In contrast to this, the form rírà 'buying' in

- (2) rírà tí mo ra ìwé dára
buying that I buy book good
'The buying that I bought a book is good'
i.e. 'The fact that I bought a book is good'

is not present in (24). It only derives from the verb rà 'buy' which has to be obligatorily converted into a nominalized form in the factive or manner nominalization. Its occurrence in (2) cannot therefore be taken as evidence that it is a noun. Similarly, kiákíá 'quickly' in (3) derives from a basic sentence (25) in which this word functions as an adverb.

- (3) kiákíá tí mo ra ìwé dára
quickly that I buy book good
'Quickly that I bought a book is good' i.e.
'The fact that I bought a book quickly is good'
- (25) mo ra ìwé kiákíá
I buy book quickly
'I bought a book quickly'

Its occurrence before tí in (3) does not, therefore, confer nominal status on it.

It should be clear by now that what happens in this variant of a factive or manner nominalization is the shifting of an element

in the sentence to the position before tí. In the case of a factive nominalization, the item so shifted is a noun, a verb, or an adverb (with the verb being automatically changed into a nominalized form), and in the case of a manner nominalization, the item shifted is a verb or an adverb. The shifting, of course, imposes a slight emphasis on the item so shifted. Although relativization also involves the shifting of an item to the position before tí, the main difference between it and a factive or manner nominalization is that only a noun may be shifted in relativization.

If the arguments and conclusions presented above are valid, there will be need in Yoruba grammar to distinguish firstly between relativization and nominalization. The former involves a head noun and a qualifying clause, while the latter is only a nominal derived by the nominalization of a sentence.⁶ Secondly, relativization will have to be seen as a process applicable to nouns only and not to any other word class.

Footnotes

¹For an example of this type of analysis, see Awobuluyi (1972, 1974).

²Keenan (1972:169) refers to this aspect of a restrictive relative clause by saying that such a clause specifies a domain (i.e. 'a larger set of individuals') and a restricting sentence (i.e. 'those members [of the set] which have the property expressed by a certain sentence').

³Thompson (1971) has drawn attention to the fact that even restrictive relative clauses have conjoined sentence paraphrases; hence, she proposes conjoined sentences as the deep source for relative clauses. However, Schachter (1972:17-19) has shown that there are certain idioms in English for which such paraphrases are lacking, e.g. 'The headway that we made was satisfactory' (Note that this does not invalidate the point made in respect to sentences (7)-(9) since they are not idioms of any sort). For this reason, both the conjoined sentence derivation and the "matching analysis" which requires identity of NP's are rejected. The proposal that is favoured in this paper is the "promotion analysis" which requires that the relativized NP be moved from an embedded sentence to replace a dummy nominal in the matrix sentence.

⁴This ambiguity is correctly noted in Awobuluyi (1972) although he regards both interpretations as two meanings of the same relative clause. Cf. his earlier position in which he regards sentences such as (22) and (23) as non-instances of a relative clause construction. See Awobuluyi (1967:195).

⁵In Awobuluyi (1972), it is stated that the ambiguity between 'fact' and 'manner' in a sentence such as lílọ rẹ yà mí l'ẹnu 'The fact that he went surprised me' or 'The manner or way in which he went surprised me' is "lexical rather than structural". On the contrary, I feel that this ambiguity is syntactic relating

to whether what we are dealing with is a factive or manner nominalization. Cf. Katz and Postal (1964:122) who point out that such sentences are "structurally ambiguous between a 'factive' and a 'manner' sense", and Newmeyer (1970:413) who keeps the two interpretations apart by the noun heads 'act' and 'manner' i.e. he derives 'his going' from 'the act of his going' or 'the manner of his going'.

⁶Schachter (1972) points out that relativization and nominalization are both processes of converting sentences into nouns and that the essential difference between the two is that whereas nominalization leaves unaffected the relation of the parts of the underlying sentence to one another, relativization divides the underlying sentential material into two parts--a noun which assumes the role of head and a relative clause which assumes the role of attribute.

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